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 Foreign sales of garments doubled between 1971 and 1974 and
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 1971 to 55 million dollars in 1975. The escalating values
 most fur bearing animals is a major economic return
 effort for Canadian trappers. The long-range forecast of
 the Canadian wild fur industry appears excellent. However,
 the immediate future of this traditionally Canadian industry
 uncertain.

THE FUTURE OF TRAPPING

W.R. ARCHIBALD

The average Canadian trapper is 54 years old and earns
 less than \$1,000/season. Trapping is a physically demanding
 occupation which requires years of innovative work to become
 efficient. Similarly, the average fur garment manufacturer
 is 50 years old. It is estimated that it requires two years
 to train a garment manufacturer. At both the primary and secondary
 levels of this industry the work is seasonal and labour-intensive,
 a long hours and total commitment which are prerequisite
 to enter young people from this industry.

The long-standing dilemma of trappers is fluctuating fur
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 designers. The absence of stable, predictable market prices
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In recent years the fur industry in Canada has enjoyed an unprecedented period of rapid growth and prosperity. Foreign sales of garments doubled between 1971 and 1974 and reached 37 million dollars by 1975. Domestic sales of fur garments also have grown, increasing from 53 million dollars in 1971 to 85 million dollars in 1975. The escalating values of most fur bearing species have meant larger economic return per effort for Canadian trappers. The long-range forecast of the Canadian wild fur industry appears excellent. However, the immediate future of this traditionally Canadian industry is uncertain.

The average Canadian trapper is 54 years old and earns less than \$1,000/season. Trapping is a physically demanding occupation which requires years of innovative work to become proficient. Similarly, the average fur garment manufacturer is 50 years old. It is estimated that it requires two years to train a garment manufacturer. At both the primary and secondary levels of this industry the work is seasonal and labour-intensive. The long hours and total commitment which are prerequisite appear to deter young people from this industry.

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trapper effort on select species, frequently at the expense of the resource.

The development of biologically sound fur harvest systems is still in its infancy for nearly all species. Very little management research has been done on fur bearers and consequently little is known about their life histories and demographic responses to trapping pressure. Until such data are obtained and used within the framework of an exacting harvest monitoring capability, the perpetuity of the fur resource is in jeopardy.

In the political arena, trapping has fared little better. It has never been recognized as a legitimate land-based industry and therefore received little consideration in the development of land use policies.

Socially, trapping is considered by the majority of urban dwellers as representative of the hunter/gatherer lifestyle from mans' past. Many see this profession as outdated and barbaric. Consequently, considerable domestic and international pressure is being exerted to change traditional trapping techniques. The proliferation of proposed humane trapping legislation throughout North America is evidence of the political strength of the humane trapping lobby. Without widespread, imminent changes in trapping techniques, political pressure could conceivably spell the demise of the wild fur industry.

When considered "in toto" the future of the wild fur industry is uncertain. Clearly, if it is to survive, remedial

ction must be initiated immediately. However, is there social, moral, and/or philosophical justification for the perpetuation of this industry? Does renewable resource exploitation have a role in mans' future? To my way of thinking, the answer must be an unequivocal "yes".

The history of mans' attitude towards his environment and its ecology has been one of incredible irresponsibility. Man has inhabited and intensively exploited large tracts of land with little consideration for its capability. If man is to survive, he must begin to act as a species dependent upon the environment.

Inherent to the survival of man is the procurement of food and clothing. It is folly to expect mans' continuance on this planet without renewable resource exploitation. Similarly, it makes little sense to endorse selective faunal utilization or exclusively floral exploitation since all species cohabiting this planet have identical evolutionary histories and equal justification for existence. However, it is mans' unmistakably moral if not social responsibility to effect an orderly process of exploitation that ensures the integrity of the environment, the perpetuity of the resource, and to eliminate stressful/painful harvesting techniques.

Many areas of North America are latitudinally or physiographically unsuitable for such renewable resource exploitation as agriculture and logging. However, these areas produce the

highest quality furs. In such regions, trapping is the most logical form of resource exploitation. Apart from its economic justification, trapping also contributes to the cultural and social well-being of communities in such areas.

If trapping is to survive, there must be changes in attitudes and responsibilities both within the government and within the fur industry itself.

Fundamental to the continuance of trapping is its recognition as a legitimate land-based activity. Land use strategies must be developed that take into consideration biophysical inventory and land capability. In areas designated as suitable for trapping it will be necessary to develop economic scenarios pro rating this activity against other land use activities. Such scenarios also must include the social and cultural aspects of this traditional activity. Only in this way will trapping acquire priority right over other activities.

The management agencies must develop a more responsible attitude towards the fur resource. Biologically sound fur management programs are necessary to ensure the maximum harvest and the perpetuity of the resource. Fundamental to these programs are standing crop inventories and seasonal monitoring of resource utilization on an area specific basis. Deficits in management information must be identified and investigated. Inter-jurisdictional cooperation and affiliation with universities

should expedite such research.

As mentioned earlier, it is the moral responsibility of government agencies to ensure that the fur harvest proceeds in the most humane, orderly fashion possible. Further, it is the responsibility of management agencies to enhance the social acceptability of trapping. Both of these ends are accomplished best through the development and implementation of humane trapping systems.

The Federal-Provincial Committee for Humane Trapping (FPCHT) has the mandate to recommend traps and trapping techniques which will...provide the greatest humaneness in the holding or killing of fur bearers... . It has become abundantly clear that the mandate must be extended and it is unlikely that final recommendations will be tabled before 1980.

Trapper educational programs must be in place by the time the Federal Provincial Committee for Humane Trapping has made its final recommendations. Without the capacity to educate trappers and effect a wide-spread acceptance of these recommendations, renewed intense pressure by humane groups will jeopardize the immediate future of the industry.

Trapper educational programs must include a wide spectrum of instruction. Life histories and ecological relationships must be delineated to provide trappers with the necessary insight for proper trapline management.

Public education also must play an important role in the

development of any fur management program. It is the civic responsibility of resource agencies to keep the public informed on issues relating to wildlife exploitation. Brochures, newspaper articles, classroom instruction and public addresses on the philosophy, rationale and techniques of wildlife exploitation are all a necessary part of this educational process.

It is vital that wildlife agencies develop administrative formats that minimize the traditionally competitive, secretive relationships among trappers. Trappers must organize into a strong national association and become increasingly active in public information. Also, trappers must develop the expertise to confront anti-trapping sentiments in the political forum.

Trapping is financially supported by various government agencies in nearly every jurisdiction in Canada. Regional funding is available for a wide spectrum of programs, varying from incentive programs to support for local trappers' associations. It seems to me somewhat incongruous to have management agencies funding resource exploitation when the limits and effects of such activities are largely unknown. Trappers must achieve financial independence to enhance public creditability of this profession and more importantly to enhance trapper prestige.

As mentioned earlier, perhaps the most fundamental dilemma of trappers is fluctuating fur prices. If trapping is ever to proceed on a biologically sound basis with an inherent security for the money and effort invested by trappers, then stabilization

of fur prices is a necessity.

Trappers realize a very small percentage of the dollar value of the fur industry. Also, since trapping is very much an individual activity, it contributes little to the finances of northern communities. It is vital to the social and economic well-being of northern communities that a greater return per pelt be realized.

In Ontario trappers have achieved financial independence by developing a trapper-owned fur auction house. This enterprising concept has proved eminently successful and another trapper-owned fur house is currently in the works for western Canada. These auction houses guarantee trappers maximum economic return per effort. However, this system has proven largely ineffective in stabilizing fur prices. In northern Canada where trapping is the sole source of income for large numbers of people, this strategy is inadequate.

An alternative is to have all components of the industry within the north. Furs would be locally processed and manufactured into garments. Competition with southern manufacturers would be avoided by producing garments with a northern flavour. There is precedence to follow, that being the international success of the Inuvik parka.

Fur management would be facilitated within the context of this type of system. Trapper effort could be directed across the entire spectrum of fur bearers rather than at species in

international demand. Also, because of community involvement there will be considerable social pressure to preserve the integrity of the resource.

The administrative and educational work involved in the development of such an industry would be monumental. Also, people with vested interest in the status quo will most certainly attempt to block the formation of such "fur cooperatives". However, this system would ensure the future of trapping by providing a sound regional economic base and guaranteeing the perpetuity of the resource.

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